## BRENNAN CENTER For Justice

at New York University School of Law

Brennan Center » Resources » Blog

## How Minnesota's Voter ID Amendment Was Defeated

By Amanda Melillo – 11/08/12

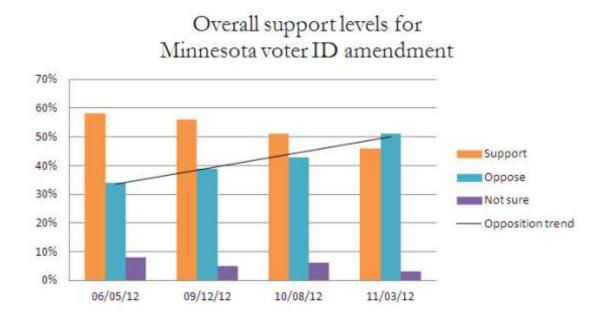
On Tuesday, Minnesota voters defeated a ballot initiative that would have amended the state constitution to require voters to present a photo ID at the polls in order to be able to vote. This was the latest in a string of <u>pushback victories</u> for voting rights, and the final verdict was squarely in the hands of voters.

As recently as five months ago, the amendment appeared positioned for easy passage. Public Policy Polling's <u>first survey in June</u> asking voters if they supported or opposed a constitutional amendment requiring voter ID, 58 percent supported the amendment and only 34 percent opposed it.

When asked again in September, support for the amendment had only eroded by two percent, while the numbers standing in opposition were beginning to grow — to 39 percent in <u>September</u>, and then to 43 percent in <u>October</u>. While the gap was narrowing, it appeared passage was still imminent.

But the poll results released just days before the election showed a complete reversal.

<u>Fifty-one percent</u> of voters opposed the amendment, with only 46 percent still in favor of it. This was strikingly close to the final election result, which left the amendment defeated at a tally of 52 percent to 46 percent.



So what happened to this amendment that was supposed to be a slam dunk?

At first glance, requiring photo ID to vote seems like a no-brainer, as it did to <u>80 percent</u> of people surveyed in a 2011 *Minneapolis Star Tribune* poll. This is because the majority of voters have photo ID, as do most of the people that they know who go to vote.

But voting rights advocates launched a tireless campaign to educate the public about how the proposed constitutional amendment would <u>make it harder</u> for Minnesota's seniors and veterans to vote, end Election Day registration, and force more people to vote on provisional ballots that might not be counted.

For example, Iraq War veteran <u>Alex Erickson's</u> military ID would not count under the proposed amendment. For 91-year-old <u>Christine Smith</u> and other senior citizens, gathering the required documentation and standing in line was no easy option. Voters of all stripes know that it's wrong for the politicians who put this amendment on the ballot to try to manipulate laws and prevent some people from voting.

Opposition to the amendment increased across nearly every major group tested. <u>Democrats</u> moved nearly 30 points against the amendment between June and November, from 54 percent opposed to 82 percent opposed. <u>Independents</u> showed a similarly large shift. While they mirrored initial poll results in June, with 58 percent in favor of the photo ID requirement and 35 percent opposed, by November they were evenly divided. Even <u>Republicans</u>, who were overwhelmingly in favor of the amendment, shifted a few points in opposition.

Opposition increased by double-digit margins <u>among liberals</u>, <u>moderates</u>, and even <u>somewhat conservative</u> voters, with only the <u>most conservative</u> voters remaining resolute. Both <u>men</u> and <u>women</u> had double digit gains as well, along with <u>every age</u> group — with opposition both increasing more and ending at a higher point with voters <u>aged 45</u> and <u>older</u>.

Protecting the integrity of our elections is important to everyone. But too often, it is treated as a zero-sum tradeoff — we can either make sure that every eligible person is able to vote, or we can prevent fraud. But when voters understand that passing these kinds of restrictive laws means making it harder for some to vote, their answer is clear. Voting is the most fundamental right of any democracy, and this is what makes us all equal. Through their votes, Minnesotans have made sure that the voice of every eligible voter in their state will be heard next Election Day.

Tags: Democracy, Voting Rights & Elections, Voter ID

Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law | 161 Avenue of the Americas, 12th Floor | New York, NY 10013 646.292.8310 phone | 212.463.7308 fax | brennancenter@nyu.edu

Washington, D.C. office | 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 413 | Washington, D.C. 20036 202.249.7190 phone | 202.223.2683 fax | brennancenter@nyu.edu